

BOOK REVIEW

Howard, Richard A. 1996. *An Almanac of Botanical Trivia*. 52 pp. \$7.00 (paper). Privately published by the author, 4 Jefferson Drive, Acton, MA 01720.

All of us doubtless have our little collections of curious trivia, produced from time to time for enlightenment, embellishment, or entertainment of classes, after-dinner audiences, friends at parties, or ceremonial presentations [“there must be some great significance, my colleague, to your retiring on May 24, the anniversary of the birth of Linnaeus . . . ”]. Surely few if any botanists have so large a store of trivia as Dr. Howard, and none have done so systematic a job of curating their collection.

The booklet at hand is arranged chronologically, with most days of the year represented by one or more statements of birth, death, first-day postal issues, bizarre occurrences in the lives of botanists, or other historic facts. Some less precisely dated items are added and an appendix lists generic names that are anagrams of others (e.g., Filago, Gifola, Ifloga, Logfia). I learn that the day on which my review copy arrived was the 40th anniversary of the death of H. N. Ridley “at age 100 plus 10 months.” The day on which I mail my review to the editor is the 181st anniversary of the shipwreck of C. S. Rafinesque off Long Island (“after the War of 1912” [sic]). A few of the events celebrated are the same as those on the fascinating wall calendars published by the Missouri Botanical Garden (sharing even their misspelling of the birthplace of Asa Gray on November 18, 1810). But many of the “trivia” are not easily found elsewhere. (I had not previously realized that I share a birthday with William Trelease.)

The author solicits additional items, so perhaps larger—but never complete—editions are contemplated. I suggest for the next one the addition of October 18, 1993: death of Ralph R. Stewart, at the age of 103 years plus 6 months, thus well surpassing H. N. Ridley’s record as the longest-lived botanist. And I suggest adding July 1, 1917, birthdate of the energetic assembler without whose efforts we would not have this delightful compilation.

—EDWARD G. VOSS, University of Michigan Herbarium, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1057.